

Church of England Records Before 1813

The Church of England, or Anglican Church, was the predominant and state religion in England and Wales from 1536. They began keeping church records in 1538. They are amongst the most important record sets for finding our English ancestors before Civil Registration and Censuses. Later, many non-conformist churches sprang up, but this class will only focus on the Church of England records.

Objectives

You will be able to:

- 1- Know what Church of England records exist before 1813.
- 2- Know how to access the Church of England records before 1813.

Church of England Records Timeline

- 1538 – Church of England parish registers begin.
- 1596 – The Church of England began recording bishop's transcripts.
- 1752 – England began using the Gregorian Calendar which changed the new year to January 1st instead of March 25th. 11 days were omitted from Sept. 2-Sept. 14th.
- 1754 – All were required to marry within the Church of England with the exception of Quakers and Jews.
- 1812 – Parish Registers began being kept on printed form.

Church of England Parish Registers and Bishop Transcripts

- Parish registers contain baptisms or christenings, marriages, and burial registers. Actual birth and death dates recorded in the parish registers are exceptions to the rule and were not usually recorded.
- In 1596, copies of the parish registers were made each year and sent to the Bishop. These are known as the bishop's transcripts.

Church of England Jurisdictions

A group of towns and villages formed a parish. If a particular parish was large or grew, a smaller chapelry may have been built. A great website to know the various jurisdictions on where your ancestor lived is www.familysearch.org/mapp. Here are the various jurisdiction levels:

What information will you find in the Church of England records?

Before 1813:

Christening record:

- Date and place of christening.
- Child's given name.
- Father's given name.
- Mother's given name but rarely her maiden surname. On earlier entries, the mother's given name may not have even been given.
- Christening date (birth dates included are the exception and not the norm).

Marriage record:

- Typically, people married in their 20s and usually married in the bride's parish church.
- Date and place of the marriage.
- Name of the bride and groom.
- Some entries may be in Latin.
- After 1753 a separate form for marriages was used and could include:
 - The names of the groom and bride and their residences.
 - Marital status of bride and groom
 - Whether the marriage was performed by banns or license.
 - The date and place of marriage.
 - The minister who performed the marriage.
 - The names of the witnesses to the marriage.
 - May list the dates that the marriage was announced (also called "banns"). This normally took place on three separate occasions prior to the marriage and gave anyone with a valid reason a chance to object to the marriage.

Burial record:

- A burial usually took place in the deceased's parish a few days after the death.
- Date and place of burial.
- Name of the deceased.
- If the deceased is a child, the father's name might be given.
- If the deceased is a married woman, the husband's name might be given.
- If the deceased is a widow, that may be noted.
- May include the sex of the deceased.

How to access Church of England Records Before 1813

Fortunately, many of the Church of England records have been digitized and indexed online. Depending on the County where your English ancestors lived, there may be many websites in which you can access Church of England records. Here are a few websites to search:

- <https://www.familysearch.org>
- <https://www.ancestry.com> – Subscription site
- <https://www.findmypast.co.uk> – Subscription site
- <https://www.freereg.org.uk/>
- <https://www.myheritage.com> – Subscription site

Steps to accessing England Church Records Before 1813:

FamilySearch.org	Ancestry.com	Findmypast.com
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Go to Search, then click Records.2. On the map of the world, click England.3. Scroll through and see what has been digitized for your ancestor's county.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Go to Search, then click All Collections.2. Scroll down and click UK and Ireland.3. Click on England.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Go to Search.2. Click All record sets.3. In the search box type the name of the County where you want to find the church records.

To access original parish registers on FamilySearch.org:

- Go to Search, then click Catalog.
- In the Places search, type the name of your ancestor's parish, and then the county, e.g. Churchill, Worcestershire.
- After clicking Search, click Church Records.
- Find the years for your ancestor and then click the camera icon to view the actual image. If there is a key above the camera, you will need to view the image in a local family history center or a FamilySearch affiliate library.

Tips for Searching England Church Records

- When searching for your ancestor, you can also perform a parent search to find siblings.
 - In the surname search field enter in the last name of your ancestor but leave the first name field blank.
 - Enter in the name of the father and the mother in the parent field. Also try leaving the mother's name blank as some early church records may not have included the mother's name.
 - Search a plus or minus of about 10 years, or more, to find older and younger siblings.
 - Type the name of the parish in the place field. Also try just the county as siblings may have been christened in a neighboring parish.
- For marriages and burials, you can also search for anyone with the same surname who were married or buried in the same parish during the time that your ancestor married or died in the same parish to find additional relatives.
- If you can't find your ancestors on one family history website, try searching for them on another site. Some indexes may be better on one site than another.
- If you can't find your ancestor's name indexed on a website like FamilySearch.org, it doesn't mean the church record is not on that site. It could be that it just hasn't been indexed yet. To see if this is the case search the FamilySearch Catalog by going to the FamilySearch website, click on Search, then Catalog and do a place search using your ancestor's parish.

Additional Information

In addition to the parish registers, there are other records created by the Church of England such as parish chest records, court records, etc. To learn more about England Church records, including additional records that may be found go to [wiki.familysearch.org](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/index.php?title=England_Church_Records) and in the search box type "England Church Records."